

Relaxation techniques and COVID – 19

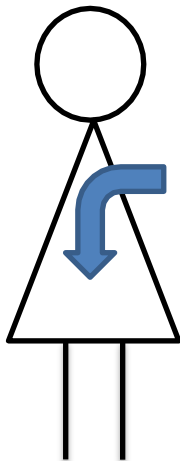
It is vital that we look after our wellbeing, especially during COVID-19 where some of us may be overwhelmed with uncertainty. It is common to feel helpless, stressed and confused and as such, we can easily find ourselves developing unhelpful behaviours where it is difficult to manage our worries. Simple techniques such as engaging in relaxation may provide us with relief. It can help to calm us down in order to think more clearly, in what otherwise feels like a chaotic time. It can be a tool that we use to distract ourselves from worrying about situations that are out of our control, and instead help us to focus on what we can manage e.g. our breathing. Additionally, it can also be a useful way to keep our minds occupied at home amongst other activities. Below are four simple techniques that you can adopt as part of a routine.

1. Deep breathing

How can it help me: Helps us to think clearly, when we have thoughts racing through our mind, it can become easy to get tangled in these thoughts, leading us to feel a range of emotions.

Have you ever noticed that when we become anxious, physical changes develop in our body, e.g. our breathing may become elevated? At times, it may be difficult to control this, and as such, we may begin to feel breathless and slightly dizzy. This is common, as you may have read this is part of the flight or fight response.

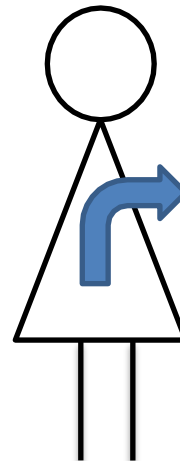
So what can I do? Our body needs to uphold optimal levels of carbon dioxide and oxygen, this is controlled through how fast and deep we breathe. We can manage this by slowing down the rate at which we breathe by adopting a breathing style. (*CCI, breathing retraining*)



Take a breath for 3-4 seconds



Hold for 1 or 2 seconds



Release the breath for 3-4 seconds

2. Mindfulness

Think back to the last time you were driving, or washing up or doing an activity. What were you thinking about whilst doing this activity? In some cases, we find that we are thinking about what to make for dinner, what else needs to be done, or in times like this we could find ourselves worrying about what might happen next. This is what we often refer to as auto pilot mode where our attention is elsewhere BUT that activity (*CCI, mindfulness*). This is where mindfulness comes in, this approach can help us let go of unhelpful thinking by redirecting our focus of attention back to the present and the here and now. Throughout this pack, you will find more information on mindfulness.

What to consider when practicing mindfulness:

Sit in a comfortable space where you feel you are able to relax

Be conscious and pay attention to what is happening to you, and your surroundings e.g. physical sensations

It is normal to think about the future or the past, however bring your state of mind back to focusing on the present moment.

3. Grounding

This approach can help us pull away from anxious thoughts, feelings and emotions. Similarly to mindfulness, it can help us refocus on the present, rather than what may happen in the future or things that are out of our control. So how can we try this technique?

Concentrate on 5 things I can SEE:



Describe how it looks

Describe its colours


Describe shapes you can see

On 4 things I can TOUCH:

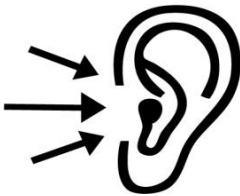


This could be holding a stress ball

Washing up – is the water cool, cold, warm

Sunlight and warmth 

On 3 things you I HEAR:



The sound of traffic? Or people talking?

My breathing

Music or instruments



On 2 things I can SMELL:



Scented oils e.g. lavender oil or candles

Favourite perfume

Tea or coffee

Being outside

On 1 thing I can TASTE:



Think about the texture- rough, smooth etc

Does it taste bitter, sweet, sour?

Quick Tip

Why not create a self soothe box?

You can do this by collecting items in a box that calm your senses e.g. photographs / magazine to **look** at, CD to **listen** to, scented oils for **smell**, or a soft blanket for **touch**.

4. **STOPP technique** (derived from get self-help)

STOP - Pause

TAKE A BREATH – Be mindful of your breathing

OBSERVE – Observe emotions and thoughts. Are these helpful? Am I assuming the worst?

PERSPECTIVE - What would a friend say to me? Is it as bad as I am thinking or feeling or can I look at it from a different viewpoint?

PRACTICE – Practice the techniques and coping skills that are useful to you!

Sources

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